

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

PA-01 ICA-11 SP-02 /039 W

-----009417 291028Z /10

P 271630Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE PRIORITY 7694

INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 4239

CARACAS FOR AMBASSADOR SAYRE

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, BR

SUBJ: AN ALTERNATE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY?

REF: BRASILIA 4063

1. SUMMARY. THE GOB THIS WEEK CONTINUED ITS COUNTER-OFFENSIVE INTENDED AT LEAST TO CIRCUMSCRIBE IF NOT TO UNDERMINE MILITARY/ POLITICAL EFFORTS TO PUT TOGETHER AN ALTERNATE MILITARY CANDIDACY FOR THE OCTOBER 15 INDIRECT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. THE PROSPECTIVE ALTHOUGH BY NO MEANS CERTAIN CANDIDACY OF RETIRED GENERAL EULER BENTES MONTEIRO ALSO RAN INTO SOME SNAGS ON THE STRICTLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POLITICAL FRONT. END SUMMARY.

2. AS REPORTED REFTTEL, ARMY MINISTER BETHLEM AND NAVY MINISTER HENNING ON MAY 20 ISSUED FORMAL STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY OF GENERAL FIGUEIREDO IN RESPONSE TO A PRESS ARTICLE CLAIMING THEY HAD EXPRESSED "SYMPATHY" FOR A PROSPECTIVE CANDIDACY OF GENERAL BENTES MONTEIRO. ON MAY 23

GENERAL HUGO ABREU, REPORTEDLY THE PRINCIPAL ARTICULATOR OF A BENTES MONTEIRO CANDIDACY, ISSUED A FORMAL DENIAL OF A STORY PUBLISHED MAY 18 IN O ESTADO DE SAO PAULO ALLEGING THAT HE HAD CLAIMED, IN A MEETING WITH UNIDENTIFIED POLITICAL LEADERS, THAT "THE MOVEMENT IN WHICH HE (ABREU) PARTICIPATES COUNTS WITH THE SUPPORT OF GENERALS ARIEL PACCA (ARMY GENERAL STAFF CHIEF) AND AYRTON TOURINHO (ARMY ENGINEERING AND COMMUNICATIONS CHIEF)" AND THAT "ARMY MINISTER BETHLEM IS UP-TO-DATE ON THE ACTIVITIES AND HAS SAID THAT THE MATTER IS A POLITICAL ONE IN WHICH HE IS ACTING (IMPARTIALLY) AS A JUDGE."

3. ABREU SAID THAT HE DID NOT MAKE THE STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM, THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW THE POLITICAL THINKING OF THE GENERALS CITED, THAT HE HAS NOT BEEN AUTHORIZED BY THEM SAYING ANYTHING ON THEIR BEHALF, AND THAT, WHILE HE HAS SEEN BETHLEM ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS, THEIR CONVERSATIONS HAVE CONCERNED PROFESSIONAL (MILITARY) MATTERS ONLY. ABREU NOTED ALSO THAT THE REPORTED HAD ACKNOWLEDGED IN HIS STORY THAT HE HAD NOT BEEN AT THE MEETING ON WHICH HE HAD REPORTED. ABREU DID NOT, HOWEVER, DENY THAT THE MEETING HAD TAKEN PLACE OR THAT HE WAS ACTING ON BEHALF OF ANOTHER CANDIDACY. ABREU'S NOTE, WHICH WAS WRITTEN TO HIS IMMEDIATE SUPERIOR, ARMY PERSONNEL CHIEF GENERAL ANTONIO CARLOS DE ANDRADA SERPA, WAS RELEASED BY THE ARMY MINISTRY BETHLEM. ON MAY 17 SERPA HIMSELF HAD, IN ABREU'S PRESENCE, ISSUED A STRONG PUBLIC WARNING AGAINST ANY ACTIVITIES THAT WOULD "THREATEN THE POLITICAL COHESION OF THE ARMY".
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(BOTH PACCA AND TOURINHO HAD IMMEDIATELY MADE BRIEF DENIALS TO REPORTERS OF THE MAY 18 ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING THEM.)

4. MAY 23 PRESS ALSO CARRIED TEXT OF UNUSUALLY LONG INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SPOKESMAN COL RUBEN LUDWIG, IMPORT OF WHICH WAS THAT WHATEVER EFFORTS MAY BE UNDERWAY TO PROMOTE AN ALTERNATE MILITARY CANDIDACY ARE NOT DIVISIVE OF ARMY UNITY, ARE LACKING IN ORIGINALITY IN THAT SIMILAR ELEMENTS UNSUCCESSFULLY SOUGHT SIMILAR RESULTS VIA "FABRICATED CRISES" OVER 20 YEARS AGO, THAT THE ASSUMPTION OF A POLITICAL POSITION BY A RETIRED OFFICER WAS A "NATURAL" DEVELOPMENT, AND THE WHOLE ISSUE WOULD HAVE NO EFFECT ON THE GOVERNMENTS RECENTLY REVEALED REFORM PROPOSALS (BRASILIA 4087). THIS HAS BEEN THE GENERAL TENOR OF OFFICIAL GOB COMMENT ON THE ISSUE SINCE ITS INCEPTION, AND GOB'S PUBLIC POSTURE HAS CONSISTENTLY BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY SPOKESMEN AND THE PRESS AS ONE OF "TRANQUILITY".

5. THE NEXT STEP ALSO TOOK PLACE ON MAY 23. CONCURRENT WITH

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7695
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CARACAS FOR AMBASSADOR SAYRE

NEWS OF THIS MONTH'S REGULAR MEETING OF THE ARMY HIGH COMMAND
11 FOUR-STAR GENERALS INCLUDING BETHLEM, PACCA, TOURINHO),
THE MAY 24 PRESS REPORTED THE REASSIGNMENT TO BELEM AND CAMPO
GRANDE, IN BRAZIL'S FAR NORTH, OF TWO OF ABREU'S PRINCIPAL
ASSISTANTS IN HIS CAPACITY OF VICE CHIEF OF PERSONNEL. ONE
OF THE TWO-LONG-TIME CLOSE ABREU ASSOCIATE--WAS POINTEDLY PLACED
UNDER THE COMMAND OF FIGUEIREDO'S FORMER CHIEF OF CABINET AT THE
SNI. THE HIGH COMMAND MEETING ITSELF WAS REPORTED ONLY TO HAVE
CONSIDERED MILITARY HEALTH AND COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES AND OTHER
"GENERAL MATTERS". (DATT SOURCES CONFIRM THIS TO HAVE BEEN THE
CASE, NOTWITHSTANDING CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION THAT THE ABREU
ISSUE HAD BEEN RAISED.)

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6. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT MEANWHILE, THE MDB--A NUMBER OF

WHOSE LEADING FIGURES HAVE BEEN SEEKING TO RALLY THE PARTY AROUND BENTES MONTEIRO--APPEARS NOT TO BE MORE DIVIDED THAN AT ANY TIME IN RECENT MONTHS OVER THIS AND OTHER ISSUES, E.G., WHETHER OR NOT TO NOMINATE CANDIDATES FOR THE INDIRECT GUBERNATORIAL AND SENATORIAL ELECTIONS IN THE STATE OF RIO DE JANEIRO, THE ONLY STATE IN WHICH THE MDB WOULD CONTROL THE OUTCOME. AND FINALLY, THE PROSPECTIVE BENTES MONTEIRO CANDIDACY HAS NOT ACQUIRED THE APPARENTLY ANTICIPATED SUPPORT OF SENATOR MAGALHAES PINTO. THE LATTER HAS BEEN STUBBORNLY MAINTAINING HIS OWN CANDIDACY, ALTHOUGH HE INDICATED FOR THE FIRST TIME ON MAY 26 THAT HE WOULD CONSIDER WITHDRAWING IN FAVOR OF WHOEVER SHOULD BECOME THE CANDIDATE OF AN EMBRYONIC "FRONT FOR DEMOCRATIZATION" THAT HE HAS BEGUN TO MAKE NEWS.

7. COMMENT: AS DAO REPORTING HAS INDICATED, THE GEISEL ADMINISTRATION HAS CLEARLY MOUNTED A COUNTER-OFFENSIVE WITHIN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, MOST OF WHICH IS HIDDEN FROM OUTSIDE VIEW. THAT WHICH HAS BEEN VISIBLE HAS BEEN DELIBERATELY SO AND IS INTENDED TO HAVE SOBERING EFFECT ON DISSIDENT MILITARY ELEMENTS OF ALL PERSUASIONS. WHETHER IT WILL BE, OF COURSE, VERY MUCH OPEN TO QUESTIONS. IN ANY EVENT, THE WELTER OF PRESS AND POLITICAL NEWS AND SPECULATION GENERATED BY BENTES/MONTEIRO'S INITIAL STATEMENT OF AVAILABILITY (REFTEL) HAS AT LEAST TEMPORARILY BEGUN TO GIVE WAY TO INCREASING DRIBBLES OF ADDITIONAL NEWS CONCERNING GEISEL'S PACKAGE OF PROPOSED INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES (BRASILIA 4087). SENATOR PROTELLA HAS, FOR INSTANCE INDICATED INDIRECTLY THAT ADDITIONAL PROPOSALS MIGHT INCLUDE ABOLITION OF BOTH THE DEATH PENALTY AND LIFE IMPRISONMENT FOR POLITICAL CRIMES AND THAT THERE MAY BE A LOOSENING OF RESTRICTIONS ON STUDENT POLITICAL ACTIVITY BEYOND THE REVOCATION OF THENOT-RECENTLY USED DECREE LAW 477.

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8. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT REPORTING ON ALL FACETS OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN THE PRESS (SEE ALSO, FOR INSTANCE, RECIFE 0101) HAS BEEN AN ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS BEING INCREASINGLY--ALBEIT STILL VERY TENTATIVELY--REFLECTED IN BRAZIL'S TIGHTLY CONTROLLED RADIO AND TV NETWORKS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, ELECTION CANDIDATES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
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Enclosure: n/a
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Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
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Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2538107
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Subject: AN ALTERNATE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY?
TAGS: PINT, BR
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